

Lesson 1- Augustus Saint-Gaudens, 1848-1907

Who was Augustus Saint-Gaudens?

What are some of his contributions to art and our American culture today?

Goals:

- ◆ To understand the life story of Saint-Gaudens, from immigrant to nationally important sculptor.
- ◆ To familiarize students with some of Saint-Gaudens sculpture.
- ◆ To understand the reasons Saint-Gaudens chose to work in Cornish, NH, during parts of his life, and became the personality around whom the Cornish Art Colony developed.
- ◆ To understand the concept of **legacy** and to consider the contribution of Saint-Gaudens' sculpture to American culture.

Objectives:

- ◆ Students will **listen** to a narrative describing the life and career of Augustus Saint-Gaudens and/or **watch** the video, *Augustus Saint-Gaudens, An American Original* [28 min.].
- ◆ Students will **construct** a timeline and will illustrate it using the historical photographs provided in order to support chronological thinking.
- ◆ Students will **write** an imaginative narrative, defining what national or global issue Saint-Gaudens might be commissioned to create a monument to, if he were alive today.
- ◆ Students will **sketch** their design for a proposed monument to commemorate a current event.
- ◆ **Optional:** An enrichment activity is provided for older students to research a website and gather information to write a brief biography of the artist.

Materials to be provided by the teacher:

- ◆ Copies for each student of the **Timeline of Major Events in the Life of Saint-Gaudens**. (available at end of lesson)
- ◆ Copies for each cooperative group of the **historical photographs**. (available at end of lesson)
- ◆ Paper, scissors, glue, markers/crayons needed to develop and illustrate the time line.
- ◆ Watercolor paper- 9"x12", pencils, ultra-fine tip black sharpies, watercolors and brush.
- ◆ Video, *Augustus Saint-Gaudens, an American Original* (This is not included in this curriculum package. To borrow or purchase a video or DVD, see "Contact Us" on the official website home page)
- ◆ Write the three recommended web sites on the board:
www.nps.gov/saga
(official website of Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site)
www.sgnhs.org
(home page of the Saint-Gaudens Memorial database)
www.nga.gov/onlinetours/shawwel.htm
(source for biographical information)

Instructional Strategies:

1) Vocabulary: Begin by writing on the board the words encountered in this lesson:

apprentice (n)
to apprentice (v)
cameo (n)
to cut a cameo (v)
city (urban) planning (n)
coinage (n)
commission (n)
to commission (v)
exposition (n)
immigrant (n)
to immigrate (v)
legacy (n)
unveil (v)

2) Biography of Augustus Saint-Gaudens: To introduce students to the story of Saint-Gaudens' life and work, we provide two possible approaches depending upon your students' development:

- a. You may read to your students or paraphrase "The Biography of a Sculptor"
- b. You may choose to screen the video, *Augustus Saint-Gaudens; an American Original* [28 min., recommended for grades 4-6.] A new film in a longer format on DVD, *Augustus Saint-Gaudens: An American Master* [60 min.] is also available, with individual chapters on Saint-Gaudens: 1) the Standing Lincoln, 2) the Shaw Memorial, and 3) the Adams Memorial.

3) "Saint-Gaudens Discussion Guide:" Use to discuss the different periods in Saint-Gaudens' life in order to reinforce important concepts.

4) Discussion Guide: "What is a Legacy?" Discuss with the class what the concept of a legacy means, especially as it relates to Saint-Gaudens and his work.

5) Timeline Activity:

- a. A horizontal time line must be drawn on paper and marked off in 10-year increments.
- b. Divide the class into cooperative groups in such a way that each 10-year period is covered, and provide a copy of the corresponding historical photos.
- c. Using their time charts and photos, each student group should fill in their 10-year segment.
- d. When finished, each group should describe to the class what their photos represent, and how they illustrate an important event in the life of Saint-Gaudens.

6) Written Narrative Activity: If Saint-Gaudens were alive today, and you were the president of the National Humanities for the Arts, write a letter to Saint-Gaudens describing a current national or global event and why it is important to commemorate this event in the form of a

sculpture for the entire world to see. Explain to Saint-Gaudens why you believe he is the right person to create this monument.

7) Watercolor Activity:

- a. Provide a 9"x12" piece of student grade watercolor paper to each student.
- b. Ask students to lightly draw with pencil, a sketch of the monument they would create to commemorate a current world event.
- c. Using an ultra-fine tip sharpie, outline the monument.
- d. Create an environmental setting for the monument using watercolors. Use watercolor wells with lots of water to avoid bright or dark colors that would compete with the monument for the viewer's eye.

8) Enrichment: This optional computer based activity is included for older primary aged students that have access to a computer and appropriate computer skills.

- a. Copy the worksheet "Enrichment Activity: A student guide to writing a biography..." for those students who will be doing this activity.
- b. They will be using the web site: www.nga.gov/onlinetours/shawwel.htm

The Biography of a Sculptor

This reading is presented for your own background information and, if you choose, may be read to your class. For very young students, you may decide to paraphrase the story.

The Early Years

Augustus Saint-Gaudens was born in **Dublin, Ireland in 1848**. His father, Bernard Saint-Gaudens, was a shoemaker from the village of Aspet, France, near the town of Saint-Gaudens in the foothills of the Pyrenees. He left France and settled in Dublin, Ireland, where he met and married Mary McGuinness. Six months after the birth of Augustus, Bernard took his family and **immigrated to the United States** primarily to flee the potato famine that was then ravaging Ireland. They settled in New York. When Augustus finished public school at the age of thirteen (approximately grade 8 today), he was **apprenticed to a cameo-cutter**. For the next six years he labored long days in his master's shop. His father encouraged him to draw, and at night Augustus attended the newly opened art school at **Cooper Union**. He was the youngest student to enroll. Later he studied at the **National Academy of Design**, which was near his home.

Study in Europe

When Saint-Gaudens was nineteen and his apprenticeship was over, his father offered him a chance to travel to Europe and see the **Exposition of 1867 in Paris**. He left with \$100 in his pocket, a thorough knowledge of cutting cameos, and deep confidence in himself. Saint-Gaudens had another goal in mind; he wished to become a sculptor. For Americans, to study in a European art school was still considered to be an essential part of a serious artist's education. When he was accepted to the **École des Beaux Arts (School of Fine Arts)** a year later, he was allowed to study under the respected sculptor, Francois Jouffroy. Because he received little money from home, he continued to support himself by cameo cutting. In 1870, the Franco-Prussian War broke out and he was forced to flee to **Rome**, where he opened his first studio and worked for the next five years. His outlook and skills matured during these years, and his warm personality attracted a wide circle of American and international friends.

Rome was also the place of another fortunate meeting, as it was there that he first met **Augusta Homer** from Roxbury, Massachusetts. Skilled at drawing, she wished to study painting in an art school, but could find none that accepted female students. Instead, she began to work as a copyist painter in museums. Not only did Augustus and Augusta "share" a name, but also they shared a love of art, and eventually, each other. They became engaged.

New Opportunities Open in America

At **age 27**, Saint-Gaudens **returned to America** and began his career; 1876 was a turning point in his life. He won the **commission** to create a statue of Admiral David Glasgow **Farragut** (1801-1870). This brought him recognition and enough security to persuade Augusta's parents not to further delay the couple's marriage. Their wedding took place in 1877 and two days later Saint-Gaudens and his bride sailed for Paris, where he knew he could find inspiration in the surroundings. He began work on the *Farragut Monument* and assumed a new role as a leader among his fellow artists.

Rise to Fame

When the Farragut statue was brought back to America and **unveiled** in Madison Square Park in New York City (where it can still be seen today), it was quickly recognized as a landmark in American sculpture. This was Saint-Gaudens' **first public work**. Some years later, a fellow sculptor observed that, "When in 1881 the "Admiral Farragut" was unveiled in Madison Square, the work of a new leader was discovered; ...Many of our best critics rate him not only our greatest sculptor, but the greatest of American artists..." After the unveiling of the Farragut statue, Saint-Gaudens no longer had to struggle to obtain **commissions**. They flowed into his studio in an almost overwhelming stream.

Saint-Gaudens Comes to Cornish, NH

It was during the summer of 1885 that he and his family spent their first season in **Cornish, NH**. He was beginning to work on a statue of Abraham Lincoln and was promised that in New Hampshire "...he would find many '**Lincoln shaped men**' who could pose as his model." Saint-Gaudens came to love Cornish for the peace, quiet and especially for the beauty of the landscape and its rolling hills dominated by Mt. Ascutney and the sweep of the Connecticut River Valley. In Cornish, Saint-Gaudens was very productive and **returned season after season**. His friendly, energetic personality began to attract a group of fellow artists who settled around him. They included other sculptors, painters, writers and musicians, all of whom were leaders in the cultural climate of the country. The group became known as the "**Cornish Colony**" and numbered over 75 individuals.

The Nation's Foremost Sculptor

Saint-Gaudens felt strongly that he had benefited from his teachers and believed that he should teach as well. He **taught steadily from 1888 to 1897**. He helped aspiring young sculptors through the classrooms of the Art Students League in New York City and through numerous private ways. Occasionally he would invite some of the most talented students to become his assistants.

Besides teaching, Saint-Gaudens gave generously of his time to other causes. He served as **sculpture advisor to the great Columbian Exposition of 1893**. He was instrumental in founding the **American Academy in Rome**, where artists still study today, and he was a member of the **McMillan Commission**, one of the first efforts at city planning, which gave direction for the preservation and development of Washington, D.C.

Saint-Gaudens' **achievements during the 1880's and 90's** were vast and included many **relief portraits** and some of his **most famous public monuments**. These include the *Amor Caritas*, (also known as "Angel with a Tablet"), the weathervane "*Diana*," the relief portrait of author *Robert Louis Stevenson*, *The Puritan*, and the cemetery sculpture called the *Adams Memorial*, which was commissioned by the historian Henry Adams in memory of his wife. He also completed six major monuments to Civil War heroes; *Admiral David Glasgow Farragut*, *General William T. Sherman*, *General John A. Logan*, and *Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts Regiment* and two to *President Abraham Lincoln*.

The Later Years

Saint-Gaudens won the **Grand Prize** (first place) for four sculptures he exhibited at the great **Universal Exposition of 1900 in Paris, France**. While there, he did not feel well and learned that he had **cancer**. He returned to Boston for surgery. This illness led to his **decision to live permanently in Cornish, NH** because he felt the climate and life-style would be more healthful.

These last seven years of his life were productive, in spite of his diminishing energy and the pain caused by cancer. When President Theodore Roosevelt, a friend and admirer, asked Saint-Gaudens to apply his talents to United States coinage, he designed the **\$10 and \$20 gold pieces**. Today, these coins are no longer in use, but are considered by many to be America's most beautiful coins. Altogether, in three decades of work, he produced over **200 pieces of sculpture**. Treatments for his cancer could not stop his illness. He continued to work however, and with the help of assistants whom he personally supervised, he was able to finish many more commissions. **He died at home in Cornish on August 3, 1907** and was buried at the “Temple” on his property.

The Legacy of Augustus Saint-Gaudens

100 years since the death of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, he is acknowledged to be one of **America's most important sculptors**. His home, studio and gardens have become a **National Park** visited by thousands of individuals each year. Here people can learn about the sculptor, see much of his work and experience the beautiful environment which inspired him and which he loved so much. His work is found in many national and international museum collections, as well as in public areas. (See **Appendix** at the end of this lesson for a list of sites where his work may be seen.)

He was greatly respected and admired by his contemporaries, many of whom wanted to memorialize him by their own work. We hope you and your students will have the opportunity to come to the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site.

Saint-Gaudens Discussion Guide

Before proceeding, review with students what they have learned so far. It is important to make the life and work of Saint-Gaudens relevant to their experience and concept of history. Undoubtedly students will encounter President Abraham Lincoln, Robert Louis Stevenson (author), Union leaders of the Civil War and a "Puritan" in their future studies, all modeled by Saint-Gaudens.

FACT:

- 1848: Born in Dublin, Ireland and immigrated to U.S. at 6 months.
- Attended public school until age 13 (grade 8) and apprenticed in cameo studio for the next six years.
- 1867: Travels to Paris to study at famous École des Beaux Arts (Fine Arts School).
- 1880's-90's: Returns to U.S. ASG matures; receives major commissions (Farragut, Lincoln, Shaw) that show new vitality/naturalism/confidence.
- 1885: ASG comes to live/work in Cornish (seasonally) and after cancer operation he chooses to live there year-round, 1900-1907.
- 1900: ASG, from among hundreds of entries, wins the Grand Prize at the Universal Exposition, Paris.
- Today, through his portraits, memorials and monuments we are able to visualize history.

CONCEPT TO REINFORCE:

- Parents looked for better life in America where father opened shoemaking business in NYC.
- Family valued craftsmanship; ASG followed his dream for art. (Ask students what career they might like to follow and how to accomplish it.)
- Learning never stops. He supported himself with his cameo cutting skills. (In late 19th century, American art students felt a European education was best)
- Becomes a leader among American artists and feels responsibility to share his time and talents by teaching younger art students.

- Although a New Yorker, ASG finds clean environment, quiet, peace and beauty of NH to be a source of health and inspiration. (Remember, NYC in those days was crowded, noisy (trolleys), and dirty (horses!))
- First time an American sculptor is honored abroad and ASG brings prestige to American art
- The value of art to interpret history and its emotive power to narrate, describe, and experience a person or event from long ago.

Discussion Guide: What is a legacy?

This may be a new concept for your students. There is much talk these days about "**leaving a legacy**," something for future generations to enjoy. Write the word "legacy" on the board and ask your class if they understand the meaning of a legacy.

Background:

The *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary* defines legacy as:

- 1) A gift by will especially of money or other personal property; bequest
- 2) Something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past

A **legacy** then is traditionally a gift, but it can mean more than a material object. It may also mean a reputation such as "a famous artist," or "an excellent teacher."

Discussion:

Ask students to think about Saint-Gaudens' legacy and the many things that we remember and respect about him:

- Established a reputation as a very **hard worker**
- **Followed his wish** to become an artist (from immigrant beginnings)
- Became known as one of the **greatest American sculptors**
- He was a **leader** among other artists and the Cornish Art Colony
- Taught younger artists and felt it his responsibility to **mentor** and share his knowledge
- Served as a member on the McMillan Commission (1901-1902), one of the **earliest efforts in city planning** (The layout of Washington, DC, which we see today, is a result in part, of Saint-Gaudens' vision and advice, especially the preservation of the Mall as an open space)
- Left us many **public monuments** commemorating some national heroes and events
- Designed two beautiful coins (**\$10 and \$20 gold coins**), which are still treasured as examples of the finest designs in American coinage
- Produced over **200 works of art** (students may wish to list examples)
- Was **greatly loved**, respected and admired; his home, studio and grounds are preserved as a National Park visited by thousands of people each year.

Wrap-up: A student's own legacy. You do not have to leave money or property in order to create legacy. You can leave a memory. Before finishing this discussion, and to relate this concept to the students' experience, ask your students to reflect on their own reputations. What would you like your friends and classmates to remember you for?

Extra Credit: What do you consider to be the president's (past or present) legacy to the American people and the world?

1. Interview 3-5 students and 3-5 adults of your choice to help you form your opinion on the legacy of the president.
2. Write an essay describing what you think the president will be remembered for when text books are written 50 years from now.

3. You may include photos and/or quotes to support your argument.

Enrichment Activity- Teacher Guide

- This activity builds on reading and writing skills and the use of computers to obtain information. It is optional and may be done individually or in small groups, possibly in conjunction with the school librarian. It is suggested for older students (grades 5-6), those students on an accelerated track or offered for voluntary extra credit.
 - The following on-line tour pages (provided for the teacher) are printed from the website of the National Gallery of Art. They follow the specific directions for those students who are navigating this site to complete the Enrichment Activity.
 - Website: www.nga.gov/online_tours/shawwel.htm.
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Goal:

1. To write a brief biography of Augustus Saint-Gaudens using the internet as a resource.
2. To develop computer skills.

Materials to be provided by the teacher:

- Copy for each student engaged in this activity the “Enrichment Activity” worksheet.

Procedure:

- 1) Explain to students that they will be using the computer as a resource tool to find information about the life of Augustus Saint-Gaudens.
- 2) If working in small groups, divide the students with three to four students per computer. Have one work the computer keyboard, two or three read the screen and take notes and another to record the steps used to reach each screen.
- 3) They will be directed to the home page of the National Gallery of Art and follow the prompts to research and write a brief biography of the artist.
 - a) The web site is: www.nga.gov/onlinetours/shawwel.htm
 - b) Students can click on the prompts to learn about the sculptor’s life:
 - ⇒ **Start Tour**
 - ⇒ **The Artist**
 - ⇒ **Saint-Gaudens’ Biography**
 - ⇒ Have students follow the **Next** commands (there are twenty screens in all)
- 4) Review the essential elements of a biography with students:
 - a. Dates of life
 - b. Where individual grew up
 - c. Education
 - d. Influences and important events
 - e. Adult life and career accomplishments
 - f. Lasting contributions/legacy

Enrichment Activity

A student worksheet to writing a biography of Augustus Saint-Gaudens

In this lesson, you will be using the computer to find information, which will help you to write a brief biography of the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens.

A good biography tells us the life story of an individual and should include the following elements:

- Dates of a person's life
- Where he or she lived
- Development and education
- Turning points and /or major events in a person's life
- Career accomplishments
- Contributions / legacy (What this person is remembered for)

Procedure:

Your website is the home page for the National Gallery of Art. A version of The Shaw Memorial, one of Saint-Gaudens' most important sculptures is exhibited there.

www.nga.gov/onlinetours/shawwel.htm Click on:

- ⇒ **Start Tour**
- ⇒ **Artist**
- ⇒ **Saint Gaudens Biography**
- ⇒ **Next**
- ⇒ As you progress through the screens, there are detours such as clicking on an image to enlarge it. Remember to get back to your text by clicking on the
- ⇒ **Back** command.

You will now have enough information to write a biography of the artist. Have fun!

LESSON 1 MATERIALS: APPENDIX

Below is a list of all materials mentioned, in bold, in the Lesson 1 teacher guide. They are listed in the order in which they appear in this guide.

- 1. Timeline of Major Events in the Life of Augustus Saint-Gaudens**
- 2. Historical Photographs of Augustus Saint-Gaudens**
- 3. Appendix of Augustus Saint-Gaudens' works**